(c) the remedial measures taken by Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI S.S. PALANIMANICKAM): (a) The Government policy is to broaden tax base along with moderate rates.

So far as direct taxes are concerned, the income tax burden on the common masses and small and cottage industries has been substantially reduced by increasing the threshold limit of taxable income to one lakh rupees, widening the tax slabs and providing deduction for savings upto one lakh rupees.

In respect of indirect taxes, a large number of mass consumption items are exempted from excise duty. In the cottage sector, the Government has already exempted first clearance of small scale units upto Rs. 1 crore in a year provided its annual turnover does not exceed Rs. 4 crore.

(b) and (c) Do not arise in view of reply to (a) above.

Issue of CHA licences

1443. SHRI RAJNATH SINGH: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether there exists a hidden policy to issue less number of Customs House Agents Licenses across the country, keeping in view of the fact that the notices inviting for fresh licenses are not advertised in the newspapers and regional restrictions are applied for aspirants to apply for the same, but once a license is issued, it is valid for customs clearance work throughout the country; and

(b) if so, reasons therefor and what steps are being taken to publicise the matter leading to widening of employment opportunities by promoting choices for competitive efficiency to importers and exporters by facilitating their international logistics management?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI S.S. PALANIMANICKAM): (a) No, Sir. There is no hidden policy to issue less number of Customs House Agents Licences across the country and the applications for issuing fresh licences are invited through advertisements in at least two newspapers having circulation in the area

of jurisdiction of the Commissioner of Customs inviting applications, as stipulated in the Customs House Agents Licensing Regulations. The notice inviting the applications is also put ups on the Notice Board of each custom station. It is therefore not correct to say that the notice is not advertised in the newspapers. Further no regional restrictions are applied for aspirants of fresh licence and any person who meets the eligibility criterion can apply. It is correct that a licence-holder may engage in the custom clearance work throughout the country, subject to intimation in the prescribed Form-C to jurisdictional Commissioner of Customs.

(b) Nil in view of reply at (a) above.

Recovery of outstanding loans from industrial houses

†1444. SHRI DILIP SINGH JUDEV: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to refer to the answer to Unstarred Question 361 given in the Rajya Sabha on 19th April, 2005 and state:

(a) the amount recovered from each of the ten industrial houses till 31st October, 2005 out of the total outstanding loans of Rs. 3908.96 crores against them;

(b) the names of the persons against whom cases were filed for recovery and when the same were filed;

(c) the reasons for not filing cases against certain persons; and

(d) the details of success achieved in recovery of balance amount out of the outstanding amount of Rs. 2,35,168 crore?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI S.S. PALANIMANICKAM): (a) to (d) the information is being collected and will be laid on the table of the House to the extent available.

Educational loans to Kerala

1445. SHRI N.K. PREMACHANDRAN: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) the amount disburse towards educational loan by the Public Sector Banks during the last year and till date in Kerala;

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.